

An Evaluation of “Ar y Dibyn”, a Creative Arts intervention in raising Self-Esteem and improving Quality of Life in substance dependant individuals through the medium of Welsh, by Dr Nia Williams.

Rationale for Study

According to National Health Statistics, the number of people seeking help for addiction is at the highest level since records began in 1993. Addiction is a chronic, complex disease and treatment is, quite often, unsuccessful due to various reasons such as lack of engagement and availability of services (Appel, Ellison, Jansky, & Oldak, 2004 in Megrnahan & Lynskey, 2018). According to Laudet (2005), recovery can take several cycles of treatment, consequently finding ways to improve treatment retention and reducing the number of relapses is key.

Several studies have suggested a link between creativity and addictive behaviour, highlighting the intricate relationship between both. For instance, a study by Fink et al. (2012) found that individuals with higher levels of creativity, as measured by divergent thinking tasks, exhibited greater susceptibility to addictive behaviours such as substance abuse. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Leutwyler et al. (2014) discovered that adolescents who scored higher on measures of creativity were more likely to engage in substance use over time. These findings suggest that there may be common underlying factors contributing to both creativity and addictive behaviour, such as novelty-seeking tendencies or alterations in reward processing pathways. However, it is important to recognize the complexity of this relationship, as addictive behaviour can also have detrimental effects on cognitive functioning and creative abilities. With studies demonstrating a link between creativity and addictive behaviour, it is unsurprising that a number of interventions use creativity as a form of rehabilitation to support and maintain the recovery process.

Creative writing, encompassing activities such as journaling, poetry, and narrative storytelling, offers individuals in recovery a therapeutic outlet for self-expression, reflection, and personal growth. Studies have found it can be beneficial for several reasons, which will be discussed, in turn, below.

Emotional Regulation and Coping Strategies

One of the key benefits of creative writing in addiction recovery is its ability to facilitate emotional regulation and the development of adaptive coping strategies. Research has shown that individuals struggling with addiction often experience difficulties in managing their emotions, leading to maladaptive coping behaviours such as substance use (Sinha, 2008). Engaging in creative writing provides individuals with a safe and structured means of exploring and processing their emotions, allowing them to express feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, and shame in a constructive manner (Mason & Hargrove, 2011). For example, a study by Drury et al. (2017) examined the impact of a



poetry therapy intervention on individuals in substance abuse treatment and found that participants reported significant reductions in negative affect and cravings following the intervention. Through the process of writing, individuals can gain insights into the underlying causes of their addiction, identify triggers, and develop healthier coping mechanisms to manage stress and emotional distress (Mason & Hargrove, 2011).

Self-Awareness and Insight

Creative writing also plays a crucial role in promoting self-awareness among individuals in recovery from addiction. By engaging in activities such as journaling and reflective writing, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as well as the impact of their addiction on themselves and others (Mason & Hargrove, 2011). Research has shown that self-awareness is a fundamental component of successful recovery, as it enables individuals to identify patterns of behaviour, recognize early warning signs of relapse, and take proactive steps to maintain sobriety (VanderWeele et al., 2017). For example, a qualitative study by Mason and Hargrove (2011) explored the experiences of individuals participating in a creative writing programme for addiction recovery and found that many participants reported increased self-awareness and insight into their addiction triggers and coping strategies. By fostering introspection and self-reflection, creative writing empowers individuals to take ownership of their recovery journey and make positive changes in their lives (Mason & Hargrove, 2011).

Social Connectedness and Support

In addition to its benefits for emotional regulation and self-awareness, creative writing interventions can also promote social connectedness and support among individuals in recovery from addiction. Studies have indicated that social support plays a crucial role in maintaining sobriety and reducing the risk of relapse (Tracy et al., 2014). Creative writing programmes offer individuals the opportunity to connect with others who share similar experiences and challenges, providing a sense of community, validation, and empathy (VanderWeele et al., 2017). For example, a study by Zmore et al. (2018) examined the impact of a group-based expressive writing intervention on individuals in substance use disorder treatment and found that participants reported increased feelings of social connectedness and support following the intervention. Through group discussions, peer feedback, and collaborative writing exercises, individuals can build meaningful relationships, gain perspective on their addiction from others' experiences, and feel less isolated in their recovery journey (Zmore et al., 2018).

According to National Health Service (NHS England) data, in 2020 a total number of 24,112 referrals were made for substance misuse, 17,458 were assessed and 15,108 patients started treatment. In Wales, 22,684 referrals were made and 14,686 had started treatment. The Welsh Government Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019—2022 aims to ensure better treatment and prevention for substance misuse in Wales, however, omitted from the Plan is the provision of these services in the medium of Welsh.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate a new Welsh medium Creative Arts Workshop - “Ar y Dibyn” - currently being delivered by Theatr Cymru to support individuals with substance misuse disorder.

Research Question:

1. Does participating in the Welsh Creative Art intervention - “Ar y Dibyn” - support individuals who are recovering from addiction?

Methodology

Creative Art therapy is often unstructured and the pace depends on the client and the severity of symptoms, this can challenge the execution of clean and controlled experimental designs. “Ar y Dibyn” is a Welsh Creative writing intervention. Sessions are delivered weekly for six weeks. Each session is an hour and half in duration and is organised by the Lead Artist, Iola Ynyr. Sessions are delivered in both group and one to one format. There is no set structure to the format of content, participants will engage in a number of varied activities such as writing poetry, stories, making drawings and collages. All sessions are conducted through the medium of Welsh with translation available for non-Welsh speakers. A qualified counselor is also made available to participants should they wish to discuss anything that arises from each of the sessions.

Participants

Participants who were currently involved in the intervention “Ar y Dibyn” were invited to participate in this study in June 2023. Four individuals (one male and three females) were included in the final report. One of the participants was currently living in a rehabilitation home within the Gwynedd area whilst the other three lived independently within the community. All four were at different stages of their recovery. Three were attending weekly group sessions of “Ar y Dibyn” whilst one participated in one to one sessions. Two of the participants were bilingual in Welsh and English whilst two were monolingual in English.

Design

The present pilot study involved a mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Firstly, observations of the sessions were carried out by the researcher and participants were invited to partake in the study. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with four individuals. Questionnaires were also sent out to a further four participants, however due to the low response rate statistical analysis was not viable. Completed questionnaires have been stored until further responses are acquired.

1. Interviews.

Semi-structured interviews based on participants’ experiences of participating in “Ar y Dibyn” were conducted. Interviews were carried out through the medium of Welsh and English depending on the participants’ choice of language. Interviews were transcribed and a thematic analysis was conducted.

2. Questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent out to a different cohort of participants. The questionnaires were administered pre and post intervention, exploring general quality of life using the standardised, WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire (World Health Organization, 2019) and the other Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (1979). However, as stated, due to the low number of responses, it is not viable to conduct a statistical analysis of the data at this present time.

Ethical considerations

The study followed the Ethical Guidelines as outlined by BERA (2011).

Data Analysis.

Data from interviews were transcribed and then analysed using NVivo qualitative research software. This software stores and saves the data and was only accessed via the researcher's username and password. The software enabled data to be organised into "nodes" (themes) in order to analyse participants' common experiences. Before producing the final report, a copy of the main themes and quotations was sent to participants to ensure the researcher had not misinterpreted any of the content. Additional consent to feature in the final report was provided by the participants upon receipt of copies of the themes and quotations.

Data Storage

Recorded interview files and transcribed file documents were stored on the researcher's encrypted computer system. All participants were anonymised and no names are used in the final report. The only written data by which the participants might be identified is by their signature on the participant consent form. This paperwork was only seen by the researcher and lead artist and kept separately from the data; it will be destroyed once the final report is accepted.

Results

"...there's a story behind everyone, and it's naturally unravelling".

A total of four participants took part in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted either before the start of the sessions or following the sessions. This ensured participants were not required any additional travel in order to engage in the study. The interviews were conducted in the same room as "Ar y Dibyn" weekly sessions in order to help participants feel at ease in more familiar surroundings. Each interview was recorded on the researcher's laptop. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed using NVivo software. A thematic analysis using Brown & Clark's 2006 thematic analysis structure was conducted. A total of five main themes were drawn out of the data. The themes and sub-themes will be discussed, in turn, below.

Theme 1 – Recovery/ Rehabilitation

One of the main themes derived from the data was the recovery and rehabilitation of individuals. Participants stated how participating in "Ar y Dibyn" had a positive impact on their recovery, several sub-themes derived from the data in relation to this theme.
Sub-themes:

- **Writing**

Participants stated how creative writing helps them makes sense of deep rooted thoughts and how it allows them the opportunity to reflect, for example:

"...things just come out of my head, it's like all the noise deep inside, it's like you're able to make something out of it".

"...the cleaner I'm getting the more things come up, things I'm dealing with".

"When I came into recovery, the scariest thing to face was me, looking in the mirror and when I write, because it's like what's in here really (points to heart), I'm not in control of what comes out, it's not all this noise in my head and it's really allowed me to look inside myself".

In addition to discussing how creative writing helps confront thoughts, it was also noted how this form of writing helps participants to express their feelings:

"...writing, it's like a release, and it's helped me go on different journeys, I've kind of left here sometimes really high and buzzing, sometimes sad, you shed a lot of tears over stuff after leaving because it's allowed me to start feeling things, emotions".

This participant discusses how writing has supported them to re-connect with their feelings and emotions again, something that addiction can often suppress.

"...writing about feelings, it's like allowed me to just file things off in my life, like I've dealt with that now, it might still be some burden to me, but it's not painful like it used to be, so yeah, the scale of what it's given me, yeah, it's massive."

Some participants discussed how feelings and past experiences are expressed in various ways such as metaphors. This allows both painful and joyful events to be acknowledged but in a safer, possibly more detached way rather than facing them head on as one might do in other forms of therapy.

"It encourages me to write because otherwise I wouldn't and Lola gives me little pointers, something to focus on otherwise I'd be churning out things from the past that bothers me, it helps me step sideways from things in the past... It's not directly about me but I'm coming out in what I'm writing."

Furthermore, it allows participants to gently acknowledge and bring to the surface some feelings or events that have been too painful to face in the past:

"...sometimes I'll write something that pops in my head that's happened 20 years ago, wow where did that come from".

"I never thought I'd pick a pen up again; it really sends me on a journey of Why do I think that? Why do I feel like this? How can I deal with this? It's special".

One participant discussed how the sessions inspire them and how they don't struggle to produce stories, possibly becoming aware of their creative talent:

"Munud dwi'n codi beirio fyny mae'r stori yna, 'dwi jest yn goro sgwennu fo, a dwi'n goro sgwennu hwn lawr a 'na' i gario 'mlaen sgwennu fo tan 'dwi wedi gorffen". (The minute I pick up the pen, the story's there and I have to write it down, and I'll carry on writing it until I'm finished).

Learning and connecting with others

Three of the participants stated how much they gain from sharing their creative writing pieces and listening to other people's stories.

"It's not just things that I write, some of the other people, it's so emotional, so powerful, I get stuff out of what other people write you as well, not just what I write".

"...there's a story behind everyone and it's naturally unravelling... the more you get to know people at a deeper level".

"It's different, it's good to hear other people's stories... you can relate so much by listening to others."

"You find comfort in other people's stories."

Some participants appreciate being part of a group and how listening to other people's work can be helpful. However, some participants attend 1:1 session and some attended both. Overall, both group and 1:1 session seemed to be effective in helping individuals gain insight, focus and express their feelings.

- Different from other therapies and interventions

Three of the participants expressed how this intervention was different from other therapies or interventions that they either currently, or had previously, attended.

"I live in a house with 17-18 other addicts you know, so were an broken community which is beautiful, brilliant, but you've got a lot of people there who are at different levels of where they are

which can be frustrating, but it can be great as well, so sitting in groups and talking I can say how I'm feeling but it's more for others... where when I sit and write, that's just for me, you know".

Here the participant discussed how being at different stages of recovery can be beneficial for others, however, this intervention allows them to gain something for themselves. It was also stated how they felt safer expressing their emotions in "Ar y Dibyn" sessions:

"... as great as it is doing a course at the house, erm, I don't actually attend... it's because I've always felt safe expressing my emotions here, and that's the thing I've always been scared to do, but in here I do..."

Being able to express or share pieces of writing or artwork rather than having to speak was also appealing for some:

"I can't talk to people or tell stories to people; I need to put it on paper".

"Dw i ddim yn medru siarad, os dwi'n goro siarad un i un hefo rywun dwi ddim yn medru, ond mae hwn, ti jest yn dod yma a sgwennu" (I can't talk, if I want to talk one to one with someone I can't, but with this, you just come here and write)

"...I've always been interested in creative writing, but I didn't realise until halfway through its benefits, then something clicks and I thought yeah... you can be writing about something that you didn't realise was inside your brain"

"... if I'm in talking therapies its hard 'cause I'm talking about some stuff that's really hard, but it's been good here to see part of my life and sometimes remembering stuff that are really nice stuff."

An important point raised here is that the sessions can unlock positive and happy memories too.

The fact that participants are given the opportunity to share, or equally important, not to share, seems to be another important facet of why this intervention is appealing, making it different from other forms of therapy, where there might be more pressure to share:

"...dyna be sy'n dda am fan hyn, os da ni'm isho rhannu, 'da ni'm yn goro" (that's what's good about this place, if we don't want to share, we don't have to).

- Different mindset and unlocking pain

Participants discussed how they noticed a change in their writing through the process of recovery related to the intervention:

"Everything I write is pain, but it's become more positive letting go through the writing".

This participant went on to discuss how all people have fears and that some will shy away from them as a coping mechanism. Here the participant explains how they faced their fears through the art of writing, and importantly, their fear of becoming happy:

"...not just with alcoholics, it's anyone in life, we fear so much, and I've run from it all my life, so now I have to go face them, and in here I write about things, you know, things that I'm scared of, you know, because I'm scared of becoming happy again. I write about them, and I feel my writing has become more positive the more I've come here, because my mind, my mental state, has become more positive as well... I can see the progression not just some of the words ...so just different choice of words from the negative to the positive, it's like, you know, coming here isn't like school, it's way deeper than that, you know".

This participant notices a change in their writing as it becomes more positive through the intervention; reinforcing how impactful the sessions have been.

Another participant stated how they had learned not to focus on negative and painful events in the things they write. This participant discusses how they had used writing in the past when life was difficult, however is now able to focus on 'lighter' things:

"I was in place in my life where I wasn't able to work, so I'd withdrawn from what I was doing, I was sick, so that's how I came about to being here... I've used writing when stuff is going on in my head that I can't cope with, and I can't talk to people about it. I've written it down in the past, and this bout of illness I'm in now, before I stopped work, I've started writing again just to get it down, coming into this project has helped me move away from that, and helped me do something lighter." Whilst another participant explains how writing is helping them 'escape' and reflect, here they provide an excellent example:

"I think writing can be a way of accessing stuff. Like social worker will remove a child, the writing can remove you. And it gives you perspective, so it is an escape. It gives you that room to think. I feel I'm a lot better and not beating myself up more."

- Focus

Weekly sessions, although only an hour and half in duration, provide participants with other goals. Addiction can be a very lonely and isolating illness; these sessions provide focus and 'something to work on':

"After the sessions I don't feel so lost because I've got something to focus on, I've got something to work around, I might not sit down and write for 2-3 days but it's given my head something to get on with. I have something different to focus on because I don't feel well enough to get a job but, I need something otherwise I'd be useless."

"I'm not just writing about stuff that's just churning around in my head, Iola is getting me to write other stuff and inspire me".

One participant stated how the sessions have given them a pathway for the future as they hope to publish their work. This intervention can inspire a career change:

"I find it beneficial; it helps me, it's inspired me, and I do more writing, and I suppose if I could, make a career move in that direction".

Whilst another participant discusses how the sessions have given them confidence to try new things and discovering new hobbies:

"When I came to Wales I was broken, ... I mean I've got my recovery but things like this, is like finding hobbies that I enjoy, just by trying things I would never say yes to".

Whilst some participant might have considered themselves to be creative, this intervention has also unlocked inner creativity, as one explains:

"I never thought I was creative or thought I enjoyed this kind of stuff, but it's really helped me like, I've got into photography off the back of coming here because I was more open to try other creative things and the two go hand in hand, so I'm quite more open to these kind of things".

This leads to the next main theme, reducing isolation.

Theme 2- Isolation

Isolation is a major factor in any addiction, and isolation can be detrimental to the recovery of individuals. All participants stated how the sessions had helped reduce their isolation:

"...when this isn't on now, I miss it and I miss the people as well".

"Mae'n neis cael cyfarfod pobl newydd... 'Dwi'n licio dod yma a gweld pawb achos 'dwi ddim yn gweld llawer o neb...ond pan 'dwi'n dod yma, 'dwi'n cael gweld pobl a mae o'n neis." (It's nice to meet new people... I like coming here and see everyone because I don't see much of anyone... but when I come here, I get to see people and that's nice).

"... it's really linked me to being outside, connecting with nature, with people, which I just wasn't doing, you know, I was isolating myself for years".

For one participant who was living in a rehabilitation home, they discuss how sessions outside of the house are beneficial.:

"I'm blessed with where I live for recovery, you know, but sort of get isolated from society, and that environment as well, has become a safety bubble. This was the first step out of that bubble coming here, and then I've just continued coming here".

Here they explain that this form of intervention is helping them step back into society, they describe it as a valuable steppingstone, something that seems to be missing in other interventions or therapies:

"I came here thinking I'd never be able to stay here and now I'm thinking I'll find it hard to leave, meeting more people just out of that environment (referring to the rehabilitation house) and just more things to do, otherwise I'd never leave where I lived, just drop myself into a flat and that's dangerous for someone like me..."

This leads to the next theme, the importance of an enabling environment and good rapport for any successful therapy.

Theme 3- Environment

All participants discussed how the friendly and safe environment within sessions is key to their success, for example:

"I felt safe here".

"... mae fan hyn dwi'n gweld o fatha lle sbeshal ia, ar ddydd iau lle 'da ni'n gallu bod yn ni'n hunain a sgwennu stories ni, a pan man dod i ddarllen stories allan, 'dw in teimlo'n gyfforddus, mae lola yn gert am neud i ni deimlo'n gyfforddus" (...this place, I see it as a special place, where on Thursdays we can be ourselves and write our stories, and when we read stories out, I feel comfortable, lola is great at making us feel comfortable).

"...here it's like an environment where you can just be free".

"It's lola, (referring to the Artistic Lead when asked about why they felt safe) from the first minute I walked in here, it's welcoming, she's just created that environment".

Being able to attend and 'be themselves' with no pressure seems to be an additional strength. A good rapport with the artistic lead is also important, the participants discussed how their Artistic Lead had been fundamental in creating a safe and welcoming environment.

Whilst this intervention is proving positive results to date, the participants also shared their concerns about its future provision.

The next significant theme is funding.

Theme 4 – Funding

Two of the participants highlighted the importance of consistency, and how this can only be achieved with funding. One explained if this intervention was not fully funded, they wouldn't have been able to attend:

"I'd never have gone looking for something like this, but I also wouldn't have had the facilities to go".

Furthermore, one participant explained how they had previously attended other forms of therapy that had since come to an end due to lack of funding, again highlighting the importance of consistency:

"...because this funding thing, I'm always a bit anxious, because I suffer from anxiety anyway so I'm always anxious it will stop...The art therapy that filtered to me through this place, that stopped, and I was getting a lot out of that."

Another participant stated that they would benefit from more sessions, explaining that breaks between the cycles of the intervention were too long:

"Weithia 'ma gaps yn rhy hir, braidd yn horrible actyli heb sesiynnau achos 'dw injoio dod yma achos 'dw in edrach mlaen ar ddydd iau cael roi bod dim tu ol i fi ...jest 'wbath i neud, maeo'n helpu a 'neud chdi deimlo'n gret a mwy cyfforddus yn chdi dy hun."

With more funding participants would be able to access more sessions. Here they describe how the 'gaps' between sessions are too long and describe the gaps as 'horrible'. They talk about how much they enjoy the sessions, how it makes them feel 'great' and more comfortable within themselves, which leads to the final theme, confidence.

Theme 5 – Confidence

Participants stated that they have grown in confidence in their writing and in sharing their work within the group.

"I don't want to speak for anyone...I remember the first time people came in, and, including myself, too shy to speak, and now they speak freely".

"She was so scared, so terrified you know and now you can't make her quiet".

"Dwi'n teimlo'n gret, lot gwahanol, pan 'dwi'n cerdded fynny' dw i'n jest fi, ond pan 'dw i'n dod i fama, darllan straeon fi, 'dwi'n teimlo fel person gwahanol. Does neb 'rioed wedi 'encourageio' fi o'r blaen, so pan 'dwi wedi cychwn "Ar y Dibyn" hefo lola, mae o'n gret, 'ma di helpu lot a 'dwi'n teimlon grêt." (I feel great, a lot different, when I walk up, I'm just me, but when I come here, read my stories, I feel like a different person. No one has ever encouraged me before, so when I started "Ar y Dibyn" with lola, it's great, it's helped a lot and I feel great).

"Dwi di deffro yn teimlo'n 'horrid' a 'dw i wedi bod yn fan hyn a sgwennu a siarad hefo pawb a jest mwynhau, mae o wedi neud fi deimlo'n fwy hyderus i neud petha. Dwi'n teimlo'n grêt." (I wake up feeling horrid and I've been here and written and talked to everyone and just enjoyed it, it's made me feel more confident to do something. I feel great).

Some of the participants went on to discuss that they did not consider themselves to be writers before engaging in the intervention, however after participating in the sessions writing has become part of their life or daily routine. Even for participants who might not feel or think they can be good writers or creative individuals, "Ar y Dibyn" seems to unlock an acknowledgement and realisation of their own talent.

"I wouldn't say I see myself as a writer, but I think now it's a part of me".

"I'm slowly starting to now write".

Not all participants found it possible to write in all sessions, however, attending the sessions alone is found to be beneficial, as one discussed:

"Every time I leave here, there's even the one time when I couldn't write, but even that time I got something out of it, even if I didn't write anything, like being here sent me on another journey and looking at myself in another direction even though I couldn't put pen to paper. So, every time I go from here, I get something out of it one way or another".

None of the participants reported any negative impact of the intervention. Observations of the sessions conducted through the medium of Welsh did not identify any language barriers. The sessions allowed participants to discuss or share their stories or ideas through the medium of Welsh or English, the onsite translation removing any barriers or feelings of isolation within the group.

Discussion

Four participants participated in semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed and a total of five main themes were identified. The first theme identified how “Ar y Dibyn” supports the rehabilitation of people with an addiction. This supports previous findings that the Creative Arts can be impactful in the recovery of various addictions (Pennebaker, 2004; Pennebaker & Chung, 2012). Moreover, the reasons offered in the sub-themes provided further insight into why such interventions can be successful. The data indicated things such as how the writing process can unlock both painful and positive feelings and memories, it also helps individuals reflect upon and bring to the surface various feeling that might have been disruptive to them in the past. Again this is consistent with current literature exploring various writing interventions (Mahsin, & Ismail, 2023; Cobb, 2016).

It was also found that the sessions provided individuals with focus, gave them confidence to try new things and reduced social isolation. Furthermore, in some cases, the intervention was perceived to be a stepping stone back into society following rehabilitation. The detrimental impact of social isolation on both physical and mental health is widely acknowledged, as seen in studies by Wang, Lloyd-Evans, Giacco, Forsyth, Nebo, Mann, & Johnson, 2017; Rohde, N., D’Ambrosio, C., Tang, K. K., & Rao, P. (2016) and more recently by Brandt, Liu, Heim, C., & Heinz, A. (2022) and Mohamed, Rukh, Vadlin, Olofsdotter, Åslund, Schiöth, & Nilsson, 2024). The importance of reducing social isolation and re-engaging within the community is evident and this intervention seems to offer hope in supporting this reduction and re-engagement.

Participants welcomed the friendly and safe environment as well as having the opportunity to opt into and out of sharing their stories, work and ideas.. This highlights the importance of allowing participants to be in control and not to feel ‘pressure’ to contribute, an unique technique that might differ from talking therapies (Frye, 2024).

Finally, funding seemed to be a concern for some participants, they spoke of the importance of consistency, security of funding and how they would welcome the opportunity to attend a greater number of sessions. With growing numbers of people accessing treatment for drug and alcohol addictions, it is worth noting that 85% of those will likely relapse within a year. Therefore, funding Creative Arts interventions such as “Ar y Dibyn” might be key in reducing the number of those who relapse, helping and supporting individuals through their recovery process to maintain sobriety. It is estimated that drug and alcohol abuse costs the NHS £500 million pounds a year, an intervention such as “Ar y Dibyn” could provide good value for money in preventing costs associated with relapses in drug and alcohol abuse.

Limitations

This pilot study involved of a small number of participants, consequently, whilst findings were positive, they should be treated with caution. Findings from such a small number of participants are not generalisable, and it is possible that if this study had included a greater number of participant, other trends may have become evident in the data.. However, it does provide a good starting point to carry out further studies on a larger scale. It was also evident that the role of the Artistic Lead of “Ar y Dibyn” was a strong reason for participants’ sense of comfort and safety.. It is possible that sessions led by a different individual may lead to different results.

Conclusion

This study has identified several positive facets to the Creative Arts intervention “Ar y Dibyn”; future research should expand the number of participants and might also benefit from statistical

analysis using standardized questionnaires. However, it must be acknowledged that this cohort of individuals can be extremely fragile, and introducing such questionnaires at the start of the cycle might not be appropriate.

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